

Media Release

Yavapai County Sheriff's Office

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YCSO Detectives return stolen \$10,000 to Victim in Fraud Case

In late June of this year, a 64-year-old Prescott resident reported the loss of \$10,000 in an apparent IRS phone scam. She told deputies that she cares for her special needs brother and owes \$9,000 in back taxes to the IRS on his behalf. She recently paid the IRS more than \$5,000 of the tax due and was in the process of calling the IRS case agent to follow-up when she noticed a 1 800 number stored on the caller ID screen. Believing the number originated from the IRS, she called and spoke to a man identified as "Allen Cooper" who told her the IRS would seize her home if \$10,000 was not paid. The victim noted that Cooper knew the name of her mother and brother and was aware of her prior payment to the IRS. This led to the belief she was working with an actual agent.

Following the suspect's instructions, the victim went to a local Bank of America and deposited \$10,000 into an account specified by 'Mr. Cooper.' After leaving the bank, some friends told the victim she had been scammed. She went back to the bank and an employee contacted the recipient account holder in California who refused to cooperate and release the funds.

The deputy followed-up and contacted YCSO detectives who in turn obtained subpoenas for bank paper work regarding the transaction. Eventually the account was frozen by court order and detectives travelled to California with a search warrant to investigate. The account holder in California was cooperative and indicated he could not explain how or why the victim's money had been placed in his account. No arrests were made at the time and this part of the investigation continues.

Detectives, working with bank officials, were able to freeze the stolen \$10,000 in the California account during the investigation. Recently, the bank completed necessary procedures to recover the victim's money and last week issued a check for \$10,000 in the victim's name. The check was released to the victim today.

This victim is very fortunate that detectives were able to track and return the stolen money as many of these cases go unsolved due to poor leads.

*Please remember that fraud suspects have the ability by computer to generate phone numbers legitimately assigned to government agencies. This prevents the suspect's actual phone number from being displayed and gives the impression the call is from the government agency represented. Always verify the number and source of the call **before** conducting any business. In the case of the IRS, they will NEVER call to demand a payment.*

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The following information is directly from the www.irs.gov website and provides important tips to avoid such scams:

Protect Yourself -

As telephone scams continue across the country, the IRS recently put out a new YouTube video with a renewed warning to taxpayers not to be fooled by imposters posing as tax agency representatives. The new Tax Scams video describes some basic tips to help protect taxpayers from tax scams.

These callers may demand money or may say you have a refund due and try to trick you into sharing private information. These con artists can sound convincing when they call. They may know a lot about you.

The IRS reminds people that they can know pretty easily when a supposed IRS caller is a fake. Here are five things the scammers often do but the IRS will not do. Any one of these five things is a tell-tale sign of a scam.

The IRS will never:

- *Call to demand immediate payment, nor will the agency call about taxes owed without first having mailed you a bill.*
- *Demand that you pay taxes without giving you the opportunity to question or appeal the amount they say you owe.*
- *Require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a prepaid debit card.*
- *Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.*
- *Threaten to bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.*

If you get a phone call from someone claiming to be from the IRS and asking for money, here's what you should do:

- *If you know you owe taxes or think you might owe, call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040. The IRS workers can help you with a payment issue.*
- *If you know you don't owe taxes or have no reason to believe that you do, report the incident to the TIGTA at 1-800-366-4484 or at www.tigta.gov*
- *If you've been targeted by this scam, also contact the Federal Trade Commission and use their "FTC Complaint Assistant" at www.FTC.gov – click the 'Consumer Complaint' tab on right side portion of the home page.*

Remember, too, the IRS does not use email, text messages or any social media to discuss your personal tax issue involving bills or refunds. For more information on reporting tax scams, go to www.irs.gov and type "scam" in the search box.

Additional information about tax scams is available on IRS social media sites, including YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/user/irsvideos>.

Citizens can contact the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office with information or questions at 928-771-3260 or the YCSO website: www.ycsoaz.gov